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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Family Day Care Program, a publicly funded service with 1,800 providers serving 8,000 children in the five boroughs of New York City. The children, ranging in age from 2 months to 12 years, are cared for from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. In each of the private licensed homes are a maximum of 6 children including those of the provider. Approximately 70 percent of the children enrolled are from single parent homes and most come from poverty level homes. The major sections of the paper cover the training and support services offered by the Red Hook training center for day care providers and parents, with anecdotal reports on the success of each program. Each provider receives (1) a comprehensive 4-week training course given at the center, and (2) follow-up supportive counselling, information and educational materials from Red Hook educational aides on biweekly visits. Workshops are given at the center for mothers of children receiving care. A bilingual/bicultural program has been designed to cater to the predominantly Spanish-speaking population, and course credits towards the Bachelor of Professional Studies are available to highly motivated providers. A licensed early childhood education teacher is hired for every 40 to 50 family day care homes. (GO)

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The Red Hook Family Day Care Training Program

by Betty Lea Brout and Ken Krabbenhoft

Van Brunt Street in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn is shabby and gray in the Thursday morning drizzle. The outside of number 402 looks just as dilapidated as its neighbors. But the interior is a collage of bright colors and gay homemade decorations, and it rings with the constructive noise of children at play. This is the home of the Red Hook Family Day Care Training Program.

Red Hook's Family Day Care program is part of the Agency for Child Development's publicly-funded day care and child development services. Under the direction of Commissioner Betti S. Whaley, ACD's group day care, Head Start and family day care programs enroll 53,000 children in New York City. Each program is designed to meet the specific needs of both children and families, and each local center is sponsored by a community group such as a settlement house, church or organization of concerned citizens. Red Hook's sponsor, the Welfare Recipients Action Group, Inc., got this program off the ground in the fall of 1971.

Family day care, the least well-known of ACD's three programs, brings together a maximum of six children, including the provider mother's own, in a private, licensed home, and is particularly beneficial to the child who does better in a one-to-one situation than in a group setting. The children range in age from 2 months to 12 years, and they are cared for from eight in the morning until six at night. There are 1800 providers--who call themselves Teacher Mothers because of the emphasis they place on developing the full

potential of the children in their homes--serving 8000 children in the five boroughs of New York City, most of whom come from poverty-level homes. As the name of the program infers, family day care embraces more than children: the relationships that develop between provider mothers and the mothers of the children they serve is a valuable result in a city in which approximately 70% of the children enrolled come from single-parent homes and in which the extended family has just about disappeared. For Career Mothers (those who use the service) the provider if often a substitute mother-sister-grandmother-cousin-aunt.

"In my experience the kind of woman who enters family day care differs from the kind of person who goes into group day care," says Dr. Mariann Winick, a professor of early childhood education at Lehman College, who directed an experimental project funded by the Red Hook center (see p.12). "Unlike the group day care classroom teacher, who has a degree in early childhood education, the family day care mother relies on a tremendous 'feel' for child care and, if she has her own children, a good deal of experience as well."

The original proposal for funds to implement this training program was submitted to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1970 by Fran Carter, then Director of Family Day Care at ACD, and Mary Jackson, who is the present Director.

Patrick Kenny, Administrative Director of the Red Hook training program, and Doris Marshall, its Educational Director, are committed to a course of action designed to develop these innate skills of the paraprofessional day care provider to the highest degree. Their

program has proven that if enough support is made available to family day care providers through sophisticated training programs and individual attention on an on-going basis, the developmental aspect of family day care can provide children a rich and rewarding preschool experience.

The Training

All newly-licensed provider mothers in Red Hook are required to attend a comprehensive four-week training course. In workshops and rap sessions, with films, trips, video tapes, role playing and classroom observation, the providers cover every aspect of child care and development, including health, nutrition and the constructive use of play as an avenue to learning.

Today's workshop concerns nutrition. It is being held in the living room of Red Hook's "model apartment" on the second floor. Ten women and one man--Red Hook's only provider father to date--form the class. To understand the importance of nutrition education to a program which serves a poverty-level population, one must realize that providers do not receive realistic reimbursement for their food expenses. Reports show that the cost of feeding a child in the family day care program in New York City exceeds by one-fifth the actual amount received by the provider each month. To prepare nutritious and varied meals with this financial limitation requires special know-how.

Like all of the teaching staff at Red Hook, Susan Frigand is an experienced professional. She guides the response of her students

whose enthusiasm belies their general lack of higher education, with insight and care. She rarely corrects what they say, suggesting instead alternatives to their ideas, new ways for them to interpret their experiences with or observations of children. An impressive quantity of books, charts and pamphlets relevant to child nutrition is evident in the classroom.

The discussion turns to discipline, a controversial topic, and the exchange between the providers grows animated. Some speak in favor of strict punishment as a means of enforcing obedience, others complain that nothing they do matters because the misbehaving child goes home to parents who either do not care or do not know how to discipline the child. Someone suggests the possibility of withholding food as a disciplinary action, and at this point Ms. Frigand intervenes to remind them forcefully that one of the cardinal rules of child care and good nutrition is never to use food as punishment. The students take the reminder to heart and before long the direction of the discussion has changed: the providers remember those instances in their own experiences where patience and perseverance paid off. This is perhaps the most interesting aspect of this classroom: the degree to which the students share their knowledge and experiences, mutually profiting from each other's past successes and mistakes.

This enthusiasm may be in part attributed to the providers' deep motivation to learn--a motivation that goes beyond their desire to provide a better all-round environment for the children in their care. According to Dr. Winick, this motivation consists of these women being considered professional for the first time in their lives. The

training they receive at Red Hook may be the first step on a road that leads them to full utilization of their talents and the fulfilment of their potential as working women.

A Provider Home

The best place to see the results of the Red Hook Family Day Care Training Program is, of course, in the family day care home.

Like many of the women who have completed the training course, Mrs. Aida Gonzalez lives in the Red Hook Houses. This is one of the oldest urban renewal projects in the city, and time and neglect have taken their toll: the hallway of the building is dim and gray; the tiles are smudged and covered with graffitti; the mail boxes bear no names and several have been pried open.

Mrs. Gonzalez' apartment, by contrast, is clean, quiet and tastefully furnished. She is a young, pretty woman who was born in Puerto Rico. She has four family day care children in addition to her own six-month old son: two preschoolers, now in her home, and two older children she picks up after the school day is over. The children's mothers, all of whom are employed, will call for them between 5:45 and 6:15 PM when Mrs. Gonzalez' husband returns from work.

Before discussing her Red Hook training she checks to make sure the children are happily at play. Juanita, 2½, is busy delivering wooden bottles from a miniature milk truck to make-believe homes, while Walter, just past four, erects a complex structure from building blocks. New toys like these as well as books and paper and paints are delivered and replaced by Red Hook Educational Aides on their bi-weekly visits to all homes in the program. Aides are frequently former providers;

all receive special, intense training in all aspects of child development. Mrs. Gonzalez relies upon her Aide for support, counseling and information about what's going on in the community that her children can benefit from. There is a deep rapport between the two women, who have become close friends.

Mrs. Gonzalez' ideas about child rearing are well-defined. She believes in discipline, but discipline tempered with love and understanding. She feels that, in the past, she erred on the side of strictness.

"One of the most important things I learned from my training," she said, "is to listen to the children, to find out who they really are and to treat them as individuals. It made me more flexible."

This change of attitude has helped her with a problem she had with her ten-year olds, Maria and Karen, to give one example. Maria's teacher reported that she was having difficulty keeping up with her class; Karen, on the other hand, was doing extremely well. Both children suffered from the comparison. How, Mrs. Gonzalez wondered, could she devote more attention to Maria without neglecting Karen? In one training seminar she had, by observing videotapes of children of various ages at play, learned that no two children react to anything in exactly the same way. One tape, which showed interaction between an experienced provider and two eleven-year old boys, one agressive and the other withdrawn, gave her an idea. By capitalizing on Karen's desire for independence and her wish to help with the younger children, Mrs. Gonzalez discovered that she could spend more time with Maria. With Maria's mother she then devised a plan whereby Maria, who is the

youngest of five siblings, did her homework under Mrs. Gonzalez' supervision and consequently had more time to spend with her mother in the evenings, when her older brothers and sisters were doing their homework. Mrs. Gonzalez believes she accomplished something important: "I'm proud of the fact that Maria's reading level has risen. She really enjoys school now. But I learned something, too: I know more about these children's individual needs."

She is also grateful for the practical information she garnered from the nutrition workshop on how to stretch her food budget and prepare more interesting meals. "I also know that when the children are counting out napkins and spoons they are learning at the same time that they are helping me," she said.

The workshops on budgeting, meal-planning, constructive play, behavior and discipline were valuable, but the component that stands out in her mind is the sharing of ideas, attitudes and approaches to child care with other Teacher Mothers. In this way, Mrs. Gonzalez says, she developed a sense of professionalism:

"I have always loved children, but now I think I know how to make that love play an important role in their lives. I'm not sure you can learn to love a child, but I am sure that you can learn a new kind of patience, or understanding. Children are just like adults in lots of ways, I mean, they are individual people. They have their own way of looking at things. My job is to help them help themselves."

What About the Parents?

Training for provider mothers has proven so successful that Red Hook has made workshops available to user mothers as well.

"Basically, the parent workshops cover the same subjects as the workshops for newly-licensed mothers," says Yvonne Dash, the Career Parent Teacher with the Red Hook program. "Child development concepts, relationships between provider mothers and parents, health issues and meal planning are among the topics discussed." Red Hook has developed written guidelines to be used in discussions of lectures by registered nurses, licensed teachers and family day care staff.

Parent training is a difficult task, because working mothers and fathers find it hard to attend classroom meetings in the evenings, and babysitting costs prohibit even the most enthusiastic parent from leaving the home. Mrs. Dash is trying to overcome this problem by freeing Red Hook parent activity funds to pay for babysitters.

The response of those parents who have attended the workshops is enthusiastic. Mrs. Mary Barnes has a son who has been in Red Hook family day care homes for over two years.

"It used to be that when I got home from work I was just too tired to pay attention to what Jimmy said. The workshops have showed me how important it is to listen to my kids, and they've taught me how to listen. Like, one night Jimmy asked me where babies come from, and I was too ashamed to tell him. And the next night, he told me! A friend of his, he explained the whole thing. I was even more ashamed then. But now it's different: I went to the workshop on Sex Education, and I think I'll do better with other

questions. Now I spend a few minutes with my provider mother every day to find out what Jimmy's done that day, so I can talk to him about it later. I'm learning that children have hang-ups just like adults, and that we can talk about them together."

For Matilda Rivera, another user mother enrolled in the training program, her relationship with her provider is especially important, a relationship the workshop has helped her to develop.

"My provider mother is just wonderful," she says. "She's my friend, like she's my sister. My children have been with her four years now, and she's like a member of the family."

What the workshop have taught her is the kind of questions to ask to find out about her children's activities, progress and problems during the day. She has also learned games and other activities she can do with her children and her provider to encourage the children's development, particularly in those areas where they need help.

Yvonne Dash sums it up:

"Our training sessions help the user mothers and fathers understand the whys and how of what is happening to their children, and the ways they can help with their children's growth. Equally important is the way they strengthen ties between users and providers of the service, in ways which work for the benefit of all the children in the program."

The Bilingual Aspect

As a large percentage of the population it serves is Spanish-speaking, Red Hook Training Center places great importance on bilingual/bicultural education. As the only fully bilingual

teacher at Red Hook, Manuel Rosell is in great demand. Most teaching materials used here are not available in Spanish, neither are educational films. Fortunately, the center has its own videotaping equipment, and Mr. Rosell is an expert in its use. For his classes with provider mothers he films various aspects of child care ranging from indoor play to meal preparation to field trips with children, and then he records two sets of dialogue--one in English and the other in Spanish, with each reflecting different cultural aspects of the action filmed in ways which support the cultural heritage of the audience. This is not easy to achieve.

"To be effective, a good bilingual program must be bicultural as well," Mr. Rosell explains. "It is not enough simply to translate from English to Spanish." He elaborates on the depth of these differences: "Take the sense of play. Most of our Spanish-speaking families are from Puerto Rico, where a child's experience is vastly different than in the United States. Here, play is more 'sophisticated' by that I mean that both the games and the equipment for them is much more complex. In Puerto Rican villages, toys are usually what the child finds, a branch from a tree, a string of cans tied together, things of that nature. What compensates for this is the great freedom of movement--there is no automobile traffic, the kids can run and play without fear and without inhibitions, Here, just the opposite is true: the play materials are well-made, professional, but the children have much less freedom, either because there are dangers outdoors or because they are in cramped apartments. The learning experiences are similarly different. Puerto Rican families

have trouble adjusting to American life styles, so I begin by translating the American experience in terms that relate to life as Puerto Ricans know it."

His goal is consistent with that of the family day care training program in general: to teach Puerto Ricans to adapt to their new cultural environment while still preserving their own identity. Mr. Rosell says:

"It is necessary to preserve that ethnic identity in the parents if the child is to grow up and retain that identity, to have a sense of who he is, to have dignity and a knowledge of his own worth."

College Credit for Providers

On another floor at 402 Van Brunt Street a course of a very different nature is in progress. It is being offered by Pace University to a select group of highly motivated family day care provider mothers for credit toward Pace's Bachelor of Professional Studies degree in Teaching.

The Bachelor of Professional Studies (BPS) program is the fruit of a relatively new concept in adult education centered around the value of the student's "life experience," i.e., time logged in jobs or volunteer work in one of the areas in which the degree is awarded--Business, the Performing Arts, Community Development, Health Services, and Teaching. It is a concept rapidly gaining favor in adult education departments of colleges and universities across the country. The years of experience of these veteran Red Hook family day care provider mothers translate here into college credits in early childhood education.

The class is being led by Professor Rita Cieciuch of Pace. Today's material is called the Reading Attainment System, and it is being used because it is the reading program in use at P.S. 15, the local school attended by the school-age children in these provider mothers' care (they bring the children with them to the center, and they are looked after by teaching staff in a ground floor classroom). P.S. 15, in fact, has loaned a number of books and reading materials, including graded readers, pronunciation guides, skill cards and comprehension tests, to Red Hook for use in this course.

Professor Cieciuch is proud of her students, several of whom are on the Dean's list at Pace.

"They are no ordinary students," she says. "Their experience in the world gives them a kind of maturity and understanding undergraduates usually lack. For these a lot of the problems I talk about in class are only textbook examples, but for the provider mothers they are very concrete day-to-day experiences which they have already had to deal with."

Classes in the Bachelor of Professional Studies program are scheduled to accomodate the hours of working adults. Pace has taken this one step farther by extending its physical resources to the community itself.

"I've gone to classes in the city, too," says one provider mother. "I've tried it both ways and I like this better. First of all, it's easier: I don't have to travel so far and I can bring my day care children to the center. Secondly, I know these women, the other

students." Knowing each other well, we work better together. Third, we have more resources here, everything the community has to offer." P.S. 15 has given them the opportunity of visiting the school and sitting in on classes where the Reading Attainment System is in use.

According to Pace University's Dr. Dagny Blanchard, Director of the BPS program in Early Childhood Education, Pace would like to take advantage of what the last year has proven: that with broad-based training, paraprofessionals are fully competent to deliver quality services to children. This, in turn, has led the Pace faculty to contemplate a revised BPS program specifically tailored to the needs of family day care providers. The funding future of Red Hook is the problem, as no one knows when the necessary funds to pay for the providers' tuition will be available again.

Outreach

ACD is keenly aware of the need for professional support to the paraprofessional providers of family day care services. In order effectively to deliver this service it has hired an average of one licensed early childhood education teacher for every 45 to 50 family day care homes in the City of New York. All of these outreach teachers have been or will be trained through the facilities of Red Hook's training laboratories.

One such outreach teacher is Alice Andleman, who conducts classes for providers at three group day care centers whose facilities are available to family day care. At a recent training session at the Wake-Eden Day Care Center in the Bronx, she led fifteen providers through an experimental human development training model based on a

modified Eriksen-Piaget life-stages model in terms readily understood by all. The results of the training are impressive. Mrs. Geraldine Summers has been a provider for three years. Her insights into child rearing are keen and perceptive and her experience as a provider has convinced her that a natural love of children can be developed into a professional career outside the home. Her present training has turned that conviction into action: with encouragement from the outreach teacher, Mrs. Summers is planning to re-enter college, from which she withdrew prior to the birth of the first of her two children, and go for a degree in early childhood education.

The family day care homes in the geographic area served by Alice Andleman benefit from an unusual link with Lehman College. At the same time that two professors of early childhood education at Lehman's Fordham Center, Drs. Mariann Winick and Abigail Woods, were developing an experimental approach to child care, an ACD Family Day Care Consultant attached to ACD's Bronx, "field office", Maureen Beirn, discovered the difficulty they were encountering in actually enrolling preschool children in their laboratory workshop. Children and providers from family day care homes in the neighborhood made up the classroom populations of the two programs which were eventually realized.

The first of these took place in the spring and fall of 1974, when two groups of family day care children, one of 15 and the other of 17, ages $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $5\frac{1}{2}$ years, met with Dr. Winick or Dr. Woods and eight undergraduate education students per group (the students earned

6 credits for their participation in the training). The children's provider mothers alternately worked with them and the instructors in an experimental classroom equipped with two observation rooms and one-way glass and observed other providers doing the same. Instruction was basically Montessori-type directed play utilizing story-telling, painting, dramatic play, blockbuilding, (among other equipment the classroom contained thirty different sets of blocks) in one-to-one and group situation. The goal of the program as it related to the provider mothers was to impart a grasp of developmental issues, difficulties and techniques. The Red Hook Family Day Care Program lent personnel and equipment to tape the training sessions.

Between January and June of 1975 Drs. Winick and Woods implemented a new training program called "Exploring Childhood", the funds for which were provided entirely by Red Hook. The model for the program is a "modularized media-assisted" kit originally developed by a Boston-based group of educators under a grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Office of Child Development. The professors trained outreach teachers and family day care coordinators, adapting the kit to family day care training needs. Teachers met weekly with a toal of 170 provider mothers to give them a background in early childhood educational theory and techniques. Films, posters, tabloids and other audio-visual materials, as well as workshops, were used.

"The program consists of three modules, Dr. Winick said, "each of which requires one year to implement. The first is designed to

lay down a developmental framework by teaching child development techniques and the basic structure of child development. The second seeks to enrichen the social and cultural interplay between the community, the child's parental home and the family day care home. The goal of the third module is to foster the development of leadership roles in family day care providers.

"I believe we made substantial progress in this direction. There were obstacles to overcome at the outset, of course--notably the communications gap between the trainers and the provider mothers. But once these were overcome we had some very positive and immediate results. I was impressed by the willingness to learn and develop new social relationships and by the progress many mothers made in overcoming their traditional assumptions about the value and content of early education. Most, for example, came in believing a child should be taught to read before anything else. A certain amount of 'unlearning' was necessary on their part before they understood the importance of play as an avenue to learning and the use of activity in the development of muscular coordination, both so important to children."

Not all provider mothers involved in the Exploring Childhood program were like the Red Hook mothers on Pace University's Dean's List: only a small number of them expressed a desire to leave their homes and begin climbing the career ladder. Many mothers want to stay at home while their own children are young. Others who want to take courses for college credit can't get away--a large family often precludes that. Interestingly, Dr. Winick's studies indicate that the profession many providers express an interest in is health

rather than education.

It is Dr. Winick's opinion that the most important result of the program, regardless of the provider mother's future career orientation, is the creation and strengthening of the provider's sense of professionalism.

"In this day and age," she says, "staying at home appears as a negative image for woman. We can help counter this by nurturing the sense of professionalism as it relates to Family Day Care."

"I think we should train provider mothers in leadership roles. We had considerable success in this area with the Exploring Childhood program: several mothers moved from anxiety roles vis-a-vis sex education, for example, to leadership roles in the same area e.g. leading workshops at city and state conferences. The ultimate beneficiary, of course, is the family day care child."

Looking Ahead

The many Red Hook Family Day Care Training Center Programs and the "Exploring Childhood" modification have not been without their internal problems. It was necessary in the beginning to experiment with hours and scheduling to accomodate the needs of provider parents; there were initial communication gaps between trainers and providers in the classroom, where firmly entrenched misconceptions about early childhood education created resistance to teaching methods and content. With degrees of success ranging from moderate to outstanding, however, these problems have been overcome. There is now no question that the quality of training provided by the Red

Hook Family Day Care Training Program has resulted in a home-based service which counters much of the criticism leveled against it by those early childhood educators who believe that education of young children is best left to the professionals. Obviously, the Red Hook provider homes offer much more than "baby-sitting" for enrolled children. And as the women and men who provide the service further develop the sense of their own professional worth and the importance of delivering a high-quality developmental and educational service, family day care can only continue to improve.

The dangers to this program and others like it under the aegis of the Agency for Child Development come primarily from without. The Exploring Childhood Workshop cannot continue this fall because Red Hook's funding cutbacks have eliminated the professional staff to run it. The funding outlook for newly-licensed providers is unclear as of November 1, 1975. The long-range future of the outreach teacher program is similarly clouded.

Nevertheless, ACD is keenly aware if the unique value of Red Hook's contribution to family day care as a way of life for more than 8000 New York City children and their families. Its Commissioner, Betti S. Whaley, is committed to the maintenance of as much of the program as can possibly be maintained through the current period of fiscal constraints.